

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

POSTHUMOUS RECOGNITION

**The Biographical Sketches are excerpted from
personal biographies
private papers
and the Newark Star-Ledger
(articles written by Charles F. Cummings, assistant director of
statewide outreach at the Newark Public Library and Newark city
historian and Barbara Kukla, editor, 'Newark This Week')**

DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN "B.F." JOHNSON, SR. (1896-1992)

Rev. B.F. Johnson was born in Orter River Township, Virginia.

He held three Doctorate degrees from Benedict College, Shaw University and the Northern Baptist School of Religion.

In 1944, he was called to pastor Metropolitan Baptist Church in Newark, NJ where he was pastor until his death in 1992. Rev. Johnson served as the President of the New England Baptist Convention for 20 years. He was also a 33rd degree Mason.

Eventually, Metropolitan Baptist Church's congregation grew from hundreds to thousands. According to a 1992 anniversary booklet, the membership at its crest exceeded 5,200. Johnson's great popularity was attributed to his "no-nonsense personality," his dynamism and his ability to tell you everything there was to know about the Bible.

Rev. Johnson was known as 'the dean of ministers' partly because he trained, ordained and licensed over 70 ministers.

Rev. Wilkes of Metropolitan Baptist Church, credited Johnson with an involvement in the formative years of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, for it was Johnson who helped arrange for Dr. Martin Luther King's visit to Newark in 1968.

He was one of the founders of the International Council of Churches in Newark, the North Jersey Committee of Black Churchmen, founder of the Black Ministers' Council of New Jersey, and served on the Home Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention.

DIANE SUTTON (d. 2000)

was born and raised in Warren County, North Carolina.

On Christmas Day in 1965 she married Harry C. Sutton, her high school sweetheart, also from Warren County. After living in New York City they moved to Newark and raised three sons.

In the mid 70's Harry and Diane opened the doors of Je's Restaurant in downtown Newark. During the early 80's Diane and Harry relocated Je's Coffee Shoppe from Treat Place and William to Halsey and William Streets.

Diane prided herself in bringing the very best in authentic southern, West African, and Creole dishes to her customers in Newark.

Diane was a true testament to community service and often was the center of charitable events.

WILLIAM M. ASHBY (1889-1991)

was born in York County, Virginia near Williamsburg. He came to Newark by coastal steamer from Norfolk in 1904.

In 1953 he became founder and director of the first Urban League offices in Newark and in Elizabeth.

He was the first director of the Negro Welfare League of Essex County. He was a member of the United Way of Essex and West Hudson, the Newark Human Rights Commission, the Newark Senior Citizen's Commission, and charter member of the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee.

His book, "Tales Without Hate," published by the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee, details many civil rights experiences. Regardless of the difficulties of Ashby's everyday endeavors, he always seemed to find more good than bad in people. Just as often he was able to get a good laugh in the process.

VIOLA "MISS RHAPSODY" WELLS (1902-1982)

"Miss Rhapsody" was one of Newark's first renowned international blues singers.

In the late 1930's, Miss Rhapsody went to Kansas City for a two-week engagement. She was so popular and well received, she stayed 14 months. Upon returning East in 1939, she appeared with bands led by "big time" conductors like Claude Hawkins and Bunny Berrigan.

In 1940, she became a mainstay at Kelly's Stable on Manhattan's 52nd Street jazz strip, sharing the billing with jazz giants including Art Tatum, Benny Carter, Nat "King" Cole, Coleman Hawkins and Billy Daniels. During the 1970's she became the vocalist for the Harlem Blues and Jazz Band which played jazz festivals all over Europe.

In 1970 Mayor Gibson gave Miss Rhapsody the key to the city for no matter where she went she never failed to mention her hometown.

HAROLD LETT (1897-1974)

Harold Lett was director of the New Jersey Urban League, a director of the National Conference of Christian and Jews' Programs in Police and Community Relations and a member of the Newark Housing Authority.

Harold Lett was born in Cass Lake, Minneapolis. He moved to Michigan and went into government service with the Michigan Department of State. After becoming industrial secretary of the Urban League of Pittsburgh for four years, he moved, in 1933, to Newark.

As director of the New Jersey Urban League, he fulfilled the main purpose of the organization. Its directive was 'to break down discrimination against the Negro in the business and industrial world, and to gain equal rights in governmental employment agencies.'

JOHN A. KENNEY, MD (1897-1950)

John A. Kenney, born in Albermarle County, Virginia, was the son of a former slave.

He was educated at Hampton Institute where he was valedictorian in 1897. He earned his medical degree from Shaw University in Raleigh and interned at Howard University.

In 1902, Kenney went to Tuskegee Institute, where he was a close associated physician and friend to both Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

In 1924, Kenney moved to Newark and founded Kenney Institute or Hospital, named for his parents. Ten Years later, on Christmas Day 1934, he gave the hospital to the community. Kenney Hospital was renamed the Community Hospital. It was located at 132-134 West Kinney Street in the Central Ward (the old Third Ward).

During its operation as a private hospital, Kenney was the only hospital for "colored people" in New Jersey.

IRVINE I. TURNER

Irvine I. Turner, who became the first elected black official from Newark in 1954, served three terms on the Newark Municipal Council.

A Newark native, Turner felt it was essential to change the negative image of Newark's black citizens. For him, it was imperative to get Negroes into positions of power as quickly as possible and on levels of government. He tried to fulfill his goal through his political clout and power:

- In August 1961, he called upon the Democratic Committee of the Central Ward to name a Negro in Essex County as a Democratic candidate for freeholder. In the same month he called upon Gov. Richard J. Hughes to appoint more black judges.
- In July 1962, he endorsed a black as a candidate for assemblyman from Essex County on the Democratic ticket.
- In 1964, Turner urged the appointment of a Negro as assistant postmaster in Newark.
- In March 1963 he helped appointments of Negro clergy to ministerial offices in state institutions.
- In 1964, he pushed employment of more African-Americans for construction jobs on the East-West Freeway (Route 280). He also urged the county sheriff to appoint a Negro as undersheriff of Essex.
- In 1968, Turner asked the mayor to appoint a black attorney as counsel for the Newark Board of Education. Turner wanted greater emphasis placed on teaching of "Negro history in the schools."
- Turner was especially outspoken when he urged Gov. Hughes to either negotiate the lease between Newark and the Port Authority or break the pact for the lease of the airport and seaport.

BERNICE BASS (d. 2000)

Bernice Bass was one of Newark's most respected African-American historians and media personalities.

During her more than 70 years, Bass was a major figures in gospel music. She interviewed and played the music of all major figures in the field on radio shows broadcast from New York and Newark.

In the 1960's and 1970's, her late night show on WNJR radio was a Sunday must for Newarkers. She also conducted the last interview with Malcolm X, just days before his 1965 assassination in Harlem.

Bass' program on WNJR, "News and Views," also was an out reach for local organizations wanting to announce upcoming events while giving listeners an idea of what to expect at a variety of community events.

Bass called promising singers from Newark area churches for her Youth Cavalcade, a group that sang at churches throughout the area.

ARCHIE CALLAHAN (1922-1941)

Archie Callahan of 75 Somerset Street in Newark, attended Monmouth Street School and Boys Vocational School on Sussex Avenue. He graduated from Central High School.

Callahan was a mess attendant, second class, on the USS Oklahoma when it capsized during the Japanese bombardment of Pear Harbor on December 7, 1941.

A telegram in mid-December reported the youth missing. A second telegram followed on February 12, 1942 officially reporting his death.

In 1942, a monument was erected in his honor in Douglass Harrison Park.

THE HONORABLE WYNONA M. LIPMAN (1923-2000)

Wynona Lipman was born in La Grange, Georgia.

After graduating from Talladega College in Alabama, Lipman received her master's degree in French at Atlanta University. She then accepted a job teaching French at Morehouse College where she tutored Martin Luther King, Jr. Her Ph.D was from Columbia University.

Mrs. Lipman moved to Montclair, New Jersey. At the urging of local Democratic party leaders, Lipman became a Democratic town chairman. She ran for Essex County freeholder in 1998 and won.

In 1971, just a year shy of her fiftieth birthday, Mrs. Lipman became New Jersey's first Black woman state senator.

Senator Lipman moved to Newark and won her second election representing the 29th district.

In July 1978 Lipman served as chair of the Commission on Sex Discrimination. The Commission was charged with reviewing and proposing methods aimed at modernizing the statues of New Jersey that contained sex-based classifications.

Senator Lipman sponsored a number of bills throughout her time in the Senate that amended the initial Domestic Violence Act of 1990 that afforded protection to the elderly and disabled as possible victims of domestic violence. She sponsored a number of bills designed to benefit and safeguard the rights and lives of children.

Almost as important as her teaching and legislative work were the Saturday Seminar classes for minorities and women that Lipman developed at Essex County College.

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AWARD RECIPIENTS

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COMMISSIONER LARRY HAZZARD

Former three-time Golden Glove Champion, Larry Hazzard, Sr. was the chief boxing referee in New Jersey when he was appointed as Commissioner to the Athletic Control Board in late 1985 by Governor Tom Kean, and by every subsequent Governor.

Born in Newark, New Jersey, Hazzard first took an interest in boxing as an elementary school student in Newark in the 1950's. The greatest legends in boxing, including Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson, inspired him to seek a career in boxing. Not only did he admire their abilities in boxing, but also their contributions to mankind. In 1967, he also began to study the martial arts and specialized in Jiu Jitsu Self-Defense. He attained the coveted Black Belt in 1969.

In 1998 Hazzard began his professional refereeing career and at the same time enrolled in the graduate program at Montclair State. He received his Master's Degree in Administration and Supervision of Education in 1980. Subsequently, he became Vice Principal at Westside High School in Newark and Principal of Broadway Junior High School in Newark.

He was sworn in as Athletic Commissioner for the State of New Jersey on February 27, 1986. Under Hazzard's leadership New Jersey has emerged as a major world boxing venue. It is recognized as having the most comprehensive rules, regulations and policies enforcing safe professional boxing anywhere. He has also been responsible for worldclass boxing officiating change, including the development and implementation of the 10 Point Majority Scoring System.

On November 14, 1986, Hazzard was inducted into the New Jersey Boxing Hall of Fame. In 1989 he was voted "Boxing Commissioner of the Year" by the World Boxing Association. On June 13, 1991, Hazzard was inducted into the Newark Athletic Hall of Fame. The New Jersey Sports Writers Association inducted Hazzard into its Hall of Fame on February 2, 1992 for his outstanding career as a boxing referee and commissioner and in 1998 was recognized by City News as one of its 100 Most Influential. In January 2001, he was inducted into the Action Martial Arts Magazine's Hall of Fame.

THE HONORABLE DONALD M. PAYNE

Donald M. Payne, a native of Newark, New Jersey, is now serving his 7th term in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was elected to represent the 10th Congressional District of New Jersey in 1988 by an overwhelming majority and has been re-elected by a wide margin of the vote in each subsequent election.

Congressman Payne is a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, where he serves on the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families and Employer-Employee Relations. He is also a member of the International Relations Committee and its Subcommittee on Africa, where he holds the position of Ranking Member. A past Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, he is a member of the Democratic Whip Organization and has served as a member of the House Democratic Leadership Advisory Group. As a leading advocate of education, he has been instrumental in the passage of key legislation.

He was the key sponsor of the minimum wage increase, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the law to improve the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act to help "boarder babies." His record on environmental issues has been rated one of the best in Congress by conservationist groups, and he has received top ratings for his excellent record in support of social security, Medicare and other program to benefit retirees. In response to the rash of church bombings which swept the country, he convened a hearing in Washington which brought together national leaders of civil rights groups, businesses, labor and religious organizations and led to the passage of legislation to protect churches and other place of worship.

On the international front, Congressman Payne has been at the forefront of efforts to restore democracy and human rights in nations throughout the globe, including South Africa, Namibia, Haiti, Zaire, Nigeria, China, Eastern Europe and Northern Ireland. He was one of five members of Congress chosen to accompany President Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton on their historic six-nation tour of Africa. A member of the Balkans Caucus, he was also named by the Speaker of the House to a delegation which met with NATO officials in Brussels and visited refugee camps in Macedonia to assess the crisis in Kosovo. Congressman Payne's support of humanitarian assistance in war-torn Somalia led him to spearhead an effort among pharmaceutical companies to donate over \$2 million worth of medicine and supplies. He also headed a Presidential mission to war-torn Rwanda to help find solutions to that country's political and humanitarian crises.

Before being elected to serve as New Jersey's first African American Congressman, his career included service on the Newark Municipal Council; the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders; and an educator in the Newark public school system. A former national President of the YMCA, he served as Chairman of the World Refugee and Rehabilitation Committee.

PROFESSOR ROBERT BANKS

Professor Banks has often been referred to as a living music legend. As a performing artist he has captured the hearts of thousand who have seen and heard his performances. The many hats worn by him is as follows:

Pianist, Organist, Choral Director, Composer, Lecturer, Vocal Coach, Music Arranger, etc. He has being a major influence in the careers of may artists such as Dionne Warrick, Leon Lumpkins, Tisha Campbell, Rev. Lawrence Roberts, Doris Duke, Joe Clark, Carrie Smith, etc. His name is mentioned in all fields of music. They include: Jazz, Gospel, Classic Opera and Blues. As a record producer, he produced such artists as Alex Bradford, Clara Ward, Gospel Cleft, Marion Williams, Mahalia Jackson, Caravans, Harmonettes and Lloyd Reese. His compositions include such songs as "Evening In Paradise" "Hey Lonely" by Baby Washington, on the same label. And "Come On People", recorded by Marion Williams on the Cotillion Label.

He also accompanied Mahalia Jackson, Dinah Washington, Roy Hamilton, Little Jimmy Scott, Chuck Jackson, Professor William Hardy, Dee Dee Warricke, etc. Robert Banks is also recognized in all the performing arts as an eclectic musician.

Professor Banks also orchestrated the music score for the picture "Legend of Nigger Charlie" which starred Fred Williamson. Years later he drifted back into the world of academia. This teaching period was spent in the Newark School District as a Music Specialist. Later on his services were required at Essex County College as an Adjunct Professor and Gospel Artist in Resident. He retired from teaching at United Academy and today he serves as organist for the Humanity Baptist Church where he is a member and has been for more than 30 years.

ALEX BOYD, Ph. D

From November 1988 to the present, Dr. Alex Boyd serves as the Director of the Newark Public Library, Newark, New Jersey. His responsibilities encompasses managing a Main Library and ten branches; two hundred employees; \$12 million annual budget; involves planning, budget, implementation of automated system. Construction and renovation of facilities, fund-raising, etc.

(January 1984-October 1998)- Dr. Boyd was the Assistant Commissioner for Planning and Development of the Chicago Public Library. His responsibilities entailed fund-raising, program planning, budgeting, lobbying, performance measures, grants management, statistics, graphics, literacy projects, public relations and liaison with support groups; participation in planning and development of the new \$100M Chicago Public Library.

(June 1982-December 1983)- Dr. Boyd was the Assistant Dean, Graduate Schools of Library Services at the University of Alabama. His responsibilities included directing standing committee on faculty, curriculum, students, assisted in planning and budgeting; managed internship program.

(September 1972-December 1993)- Dr. Boyd was the Assistant Dean at Alabama State University, Montgomery, Alabama. His responsibilities included supervising library operations, collection development, program planning and staff development. He taught courses in undergraduate program, reference, bibliography of the humanities and media for young adults.

(September 1971-June 1980)- Dr. Boyd graduated from the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey where he received his Ph.D.

Some of his Presentations and Workshops were Archons of Colophon, February 1990. "Reflection on Being a (Minority) Librarian in Our Time", National Endowment for the Humanities, 1979, Panelist and Reader, Public Library Programs.

Dr. Boyd's associations include the American Library Association, Member of Governing Council, 1992-1996; New Jersey Library Association, President 1997; American Library Association Black Caucus, President, 1992-1994.

THE HONORABLE KENNETH GIBSON

Kenneth A. Gibson was the 36th Mayor of Newark—New Jersey's largest City. He was first elected to the position in 1970, and re-elected in 1974, 1978, and 1982. He is the first Mayor to serve more than two terms under Newark's present form of government, and served longer as Mayor than any person in the City's history.

In 1976-77, he served a one-year term as President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and for several years he represented America's Big-City Mayors at many public forums.

Gibson has appeared before the Joint Economics Committee of the U.S. Congress; the Labor, Education and Ways and Means, and Judiciary Committees of the House, the Labor and Welfare Committees of the House, the Labor and Welfare Committees of the Senate, and diverse national and state organizations.

Gibson received national attention and acclaim for his achievements, such as the Fiorello H. LaGuardia Award of the New School Magazine as one of America's outstanding 200 young men. Gibson was saluted by the Times of London as an example of the type of international political leadership which will be developed in the future. He was awarded the National Jefferson Award for lifetime achievement in 1997.

Gibson earned a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from the N. J. Institute of Technology. Mayor Gibson is now President of Gibson Associates, a private consulting firm specializing in Civil Engineering, Construction Management, and Affirmative Action Program.

THE REVEREND DR. WILLIAM D. WATLEY

Reverend Watley has been the Senior Pastor of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, Newark, NJ since 1984. He is also Chairman of the Board of Directors for the St. James Preparatory School.

At Paul Quinn College, Reverend Watley was President and Distinguished Professor of Religion from the year 1983 to 1987. He taught courses at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and New York Theological Seminary. Reverend Watley has served as a counselor at the Human Development Corporation, St. Louis, Missouri.

Selected Accomplishments (St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church)

- Stimulated an increase in church membership by 2,800 individuals.
- Established tithing as a way of life for the congregation, with efforts resulting in a 600% increase in annual revenue.
- Defined vision for and founded St. James Preparatory School, A Christian Academy of Excellence: a biblically and technology-based learning environment providing education for the 21st century, whose ideology and mission is that children are capable of learning far more than is expected of them.
- Established the St. James Christian Learning Center, which provides continuing education in Spiritual Development, Christian Witness and Leadership, Christian Stewardship, and Economic Development.
- Conceptualized and established St. James Social Services Corporation, which serves as the umbrella organization for various outreach programs of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. Reflecting a demonstrated commitment to the community and the ever-growing social outreach ministry of the church, the organization consists of an Intergenerational After School Program, Emergency Food Pantry, Daily Feeding Program, Safe Haven Summer Camp, St. James Center for Family Life, and Be a Blessing Holiday Food and Toy Distribution Campaigns.
- Initiated the Wednesday "Sweet Hour of Praise", a noonday service which ministers to business professionals and working communities in the downtown Newark area and attracts approximately 800 worshippers weekly.
- Launched a Men's Bible Study group, a vibrant Saturday morning evaluation and discussion of contemporary and spiritual issues that draws an average of 60 to 70 men per week.
- Founded a Women's Bible Study group, a Wednesday evening forum providing study, discussions, and relevant social guidance for today's African-American women.
- Designed and inaugurated New Life Ministry, a 14-week study program for new converts as well as existing members desiring to strengthen their life in Christ and learn more about the African Methodist Episcopal denomination.
- Established Media Ministries, a Sunday evening radio broadcast supplement by video and cassette tapes, which propagate the love and saving grace of our Master.

- Initiated Dance Ministries with four divisions (for men, women, seniors, and young people) providing an environment through which worshippers praise God via liturgical dance.
- Developed a weeklong Fall Revival and a three-day Spring Growth Conference targeting people of God in the Newark and surrounding communities.

Reverend Watley is the author of twelve books including his latest, The African Presence in the Bible: Gospel Sermons Rooted in History. He authored two booklets and many articles including: “Growth and a New Millennium”, The African-American Pulpit, Millennium Issue, and “Martin Luther King, Jr.”, Nonviolence-Central to Christian Spirituality.

HAJJA FREDRICA BEY

Fredrica Bey grew up in Newark's old Third Ward on 15th Avenue, better known as "The Hill".

In 1968 she married and had two beautiful Daughters, Amina and Fatima.

She became a single parent in 1975. In 1980 she began to work for the Newark Board of Education Title I Program and decided to move her family from their Section 8 Apartment to their own home in East Orange, where she still resides.

Miss Bey wrote a thank you letter to the Essex County Welfare Department stating that their services were no longer required. Her thank you letter stated that "Welfare" spelled backwards is "Farewell". She wanted to be the first to say Good-bye and thank you very much.

Fredrica, has served on numerous Community and grassroots organizations such as: Co-chairwoman of The Peoples Organization For Progress, A Founding Member of Jihad Health Network Inc., Treasure of The New Jersey Coalition of The Million Man March, The Chairwoman of The Women In Support Of the Million Man March, Inc., Board Member of Black Cops Against Police Brutality, A recent Mentor with 10,000 Mentors, Board Member of the Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministries Credit Union, and currently Coordinator of the Anti-Lynching Campaign, and Executive Director of Women In Support of The Million Man March.

While President of the Tenant Association in 1978, Fredrica, working with the Late Fire Director of Newark, John Caulfield, developed the Carmel Towers Fire Brigade. A series of meetings with city and state officials resulted in the Smoke Detector Legislation being implemented in the State of New Jersey for multiple dwellings.

In 1992, Fredrica realized that a massive silent lynching continues to plague this country. Determined to bring this plight into focus, she organized the Anti Lynching Campaign.

Bey's words, "when we fight against oppression, for God says, "Oppression is worst than Slaughter", and are consistent in our fight for Freedom, Justice and Human Dignity, "The Victory Has already been Won! Long lives the Spirit of "The Million Man March"!

LONNIE WRIGHT

Lonnie Wright served as Associate Director and subsequently as Director of Undergraduate and Pre-Matriculation Programs at UMNDJ-New Jersey Medical School for the past 28 years. These college level summer programs under his direction have helped to prepare underrepresented minority students for careers in the health professions. During this time over 4000 have benefited from his summer programs, and over 850 minority students have become doctors and dentist, in addition to countless health professionals.

SPORTS HISTORY:

HIGH SCHOOL (SOUTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL) AKA SHABAZZ HIGH, Newark, NJ (1958-1962)

Football:

All City, All County, All State – 1961

Honorable Mention All-American, Parade Magazine – 1961

South Side High – Undefeated season – 1961

Basketball

All City, All County, All State – 1962

Honorable Mention All-American, Parade Magazine – 1962

South Side High School, Essex County Champs, 1960

South Side High School, Group III State Champs, 1962

Track & Field

City Champion, Javelin and Long Jump, 1961

State Track Meet (Group III), 2nd place long jump, 3rd place shot put, 1962

Professional Sports:

Denver Broncos – American Football League (AFL), Defensive Back 1966 & 1967

Denver Rockets – American Basketball League (ABA), 1967-1972

*One of few athletes to play two professional sports in the same year

Post Career Honors:

Elected into the initial Newark Athletic Hall of Fame, 1988

Elected into the Colorado State University, Hall of Fame, 1989

Elected into New Jersey Scholastic, Hall of Fame, 1997

Selected by The Star Ledger as one of the top 50 athletes in New Jersey of the century (selected 5th overall).

Selected by The Denver Post as one of the top 50 athletes in Colorado of the century

AMEALIA STEWARD

Amealia Steward was born in Albany, Georgia. Mrs. Steward over 80 years old although she never has revealed her exact age.

Mrs. Steward came to Newark in 1932. She opened her first business, Steward's Restaurant, on Prince Street in 1949.

In 1957 the restaurant moved to Avon Avenue. The Avon Avenue restaurant was her biggest and most catered to restaurant by thousands.

Everyone: the wealthy, the struggling blue collar workers, the politicians, the religious leaders, the after-church-family members, the young and the old came to Mrs. Steward's Restaurant.

The restaurant moved from Avon Avenue to Lyons Avenue in 1969 where today it continues to service the residents of Newark and beyond.

Mrs. Steward is a member of Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Much of Mrs. Steward's wealth was acquired through real estate dealings.

AMIRI BARAKA

Born in Newark, New Jersey as Everett LeRoy (later LeRoi) Jones, Amiri Baraka is recognized as one of the most important twentieth and twenty-first century American writers. With a literary enterprise that encompasses a wide-range of genre, including poetry, drama, jazz operas, the novel, and non-fiction. Baraka has played a pivotal role in shaping modern cultural and intellectual discourses from the Cold War period of the early 1960's, to the present. Indeed from the first collection of poetry **Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note** (1961), through twenty-one collections of poetry, fifty-four plays, seven collections of plays, four screenplays, ten collections of essays, (one with Amina Baraka, his dancer, singer, poet, activist wife), a novel, one autobiography, and a collection of stories, plus numerous uncollected poems, fiction and non-fiction, his art and political vision continue to influence the consciousness of readers around the world. Recently, *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* (2000), edited by William J. Harris, and *The Fiction of LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka* (2000), edited by Baraka and Greg Tate, offer overview of his continuing work.

After attending Howard University in Washington, D.C., he served in the United States Air Force. In the late fifties he settled in New York Greenwich Village where he was a central figure of that bohemian scene. He became nationally prominent in 1964, with the New York production of his Obie Award-winning play, *Dutchman*.

After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, Baraka severed his ties, both public and private, with Greenwich Village and moved to Harlem, emerging as a poet whose artistic goal was the celebration of Black culture. He formed institutions which reflected the rising Black political and cultural consciousness that was taking root and blooming across the country. He founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School, which became a model for the development of Black cultural centers in the 1960s. In 1966, he returned to his hometown of Newark, where he established Spirit House, a Black repertory theater and cultural center. From the mid-sixties to the end of the decade, his creative works both dramatic and poetic were unabashedly dedicated to the cultivation of a new Black Aesthetic.

By 1974, Baraka had embraced international socialism, coming to feel, as he stated, that "The analysis of our condition must be made in term of class and an international struggle."

A man of many letters working in the academy, Baraka has taught at Columbia University, the New School for Social Research, San Francisco State College, Yale University, George Washington University. After teaching twenty years in the Department of Africana Studies at SUNY- Stony Brook, he retired.

However, in retirement he is as active and productive as an artist and intellectual as he has ever been in his career.

REVEREND DR. ERWARD W. VERNER

Doctor Verner is a theologian and a medical doctor.

In 1940, Dr. Verner received his Bachelor of Science Degree (cum laude) from Morehouse College and four years later his MD degree from Meharry Medical College.

After finishing with honors in his internship at Hubbard Hospital (Tennessee) in 1945, he served a five-year residency in General Surgery at Meharry Medical College. Upon completing a two year Fellowship in Breast Cancer at Columbia University, New York he gained the rank of Captain in the US Air Force Medical Division and was discharged with High Commendations in 1954.

In 1960 Dr. Verner completed his studies at Drew Theology Seminary in Morristown.

Dr. Verner is the founder of two major ministerial organizations: Newark-North Jersey Committee of Black Churchmen and Black Ministers Council of New Jersey. He is the also the founder of the Interfaith Health Services, Inc.

Dr. Verner is Senior Associate Pastor of St. James A.M.E. Church.

Since setting up his Medical Practice in Newark in 1954, Dr. Verner is known as THE doctor to see for your physical and spiritual needs.

THE THREE DOCTORS -

GEORGE JENKNS, DMD; RAMECK HUNT, MD; SAMPSON DAVIS, DM

A decade and a half ago, three teenage boys from Newark made a pact: they would stick together to go to college-graduate-and become doctors. Surrounded by negative influences and having few positive role models, made it a not so easy feat. Now, over thirteen years later, these three men have overcome countless obstacles and proudly bear the subtitle of doctor.

Doctors George Jenkins, Rameck Hunt and Sampson Davis deliver a well-needed and urgent message of hope and inspiration everywhere they go. Their messages – *Never underestimate the power of self-reliance and inner strength. Attach a timeline and devise a strategy for achieving your goals. Finally, surround yourself with like-minded people who are in line with your aspirations.*

Dr. George Jenkins is currently doing his fellowship in oral medicine and just recently completed his general dentistry residency. He completed his undergraduate studies at Seton Hall University and graduated from the University of Dentistry of New Jersey.

Dr. Rameck Hunt is a resident in Internal Medicine. He received a Bachelor of Science from Seton Hall University and is a proud graduate of The Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Dr. Sampson Davis is currently completing his residency in Emergency Medicine. He completed his undergraduate studies at Seton Hall University, graduating cum laude and attending medical school at The Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Their pet project is The Three Doctors Foundation, an all-purpose community organization based in Newark that provides scholarships, drug-prevention programs, mentoring, and more. “We also want to open a clinic for people who don’t have insurance. They need it just as much as everyone else,” says Hunt.

The Three Doctors recently received the prestigious Essence Award for their accomplishments and leadership. In addition to their award, their groundbreaking television special aired on Lifetime television during a special segment entitled “Things We Do For Love”.

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts one can give is the gift of self and these three men do it often and wholeheartedly.

THE READY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The READY Scholars Program was established in Newark, New Jersey in 1987 as an educational assistance program for Newark youth. The mission of READY, which is the acronym for Rigorous Educational Assistance for Deserving Youth, has always been to provide opportunities for Newark's youth to achieve educational excellence. Mayor James was one of the pioneers of READY.

Throughout the years, changes to the program have been made³ to "keep up with the times." All of this have been good for our youth. Along with the evolution, the overall mission changed. READY's mission is to provide Newark students with a network of assistance and support that will enable them to:

1. Complete High School
2. Enroll and graduate from college or a post-secondary program
3. Gain employment skills
4. Strive continually for self, family and community improvement

At the end of year 2000, READY has provided services to over 1,000 students and their families.

The READY Scholars Program is now under the enterprises of THE READY FOUNDATION. (The mission of the READY Foundation is to assist Newark's children to obtain their high school education prepare them to enroll in college or other post secondary program or enter into a career of their choice.) READY seeks to help its children develop positive habits and to advance the well being of others as they strive to attain excellence for themselves. READY achieves this in partnership with others, beginning with the child's family.

We honor Edith A. Minnicks as the Director of the READY Scholars Program and The READY Foundation.